

## *A Pain in the Foot*

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One of the most important parts of the body and possibly the most ignored are our feet. Maybe it is because the feet are usually out of view or because they are not considered “vital organs” that we don’t properly care for them. By care I don’t mean merely clipping and painting the nails or even shaving down calluses and moisturizing. These things are fine for the superficial care of the feet but the feet are much more than skin and nails. In the Marine Corps, we were always told to take care of our feet. To keep them clean, warm and dry, so as to avoid trench foot, frostbite or infection. I saw this first hand during long, rainy maneuvers in soldiers who did not heed the warning of foot care. Trench foot is an ugly and painful thing.

Each foot is complex with 26 bones, numerous muscles, tendons, ligaments, arteries, veins, lymphatic vessels and a very misunderstood type of connective tissue called *fascia*. The *plantar fascia* is a very tough membrane that surrounds, cushions and protects the muscles at the bottom of the feet and runs from the bottom of the heel to the base of the toes just deep to the soles of the feet. This area is particularly vulnerable to neglect and the pounding of daily activities and can form *adhesions* (tiny areas of scar tissue) causing tightness and great pain. This condition is known as plantar fasciitis and affects millions of people. It may be difficult to walk long distances without cramping or even stand upright in the morning when brushing your teeth. The typical medical treatments may include anti-inflammatory pills, cortisone shots, high-energy ultrasonic blasts or even a surgical “release” of the plantar fascia by cutting a small diamond-shaped opening in the fascia to allow it to lengthen, reducing the stress.

But another, less invasive approach might be to restore the natural suppleness of the feet with specific chiropractic adjustments and to break up the adhesions manually at the affected area with specific massage therapy. Rolling a tennis ball or an icy water bottle under foot can help on days when the patient is not getting treatment. The results are usually excellent and drugs or surgery may be avoided. Once the pain is gone, a regimen of regular adjustment and massage which incorporate the feet should keep the pain away and provide a better foundation for all your activities.

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